

Legislative Profile

By Coleen Vansant, Information Manager, Alabama Forestry Commission



Allen Layson
Democrat
District 61

Allen Layson will proudly tell you that he is the only registered forester in a state House of Representatives in the nation. This fact, along with many other interests in forestry and natural resources, has made him a key champion in the state legislature for forestry, forest industry, and volunteer fire departments.

Representative Layson is a native of Georgia where he received his degree in forestry from the University of Georgia. His experience in the forestry industry is extensive, including 14 years with Bowater Incorporated and 18 years at Weyerhaeuser Company. He is currently employed with Midsouth Forestry Services as a consulting forester. He and his wife JoAnn have called Reform home for many years and have five children, “all grown” according to Layson.

Currently serving in his fifth term as representative of the 61st District, which includes Pickens and Tuscaloosa coun-

ties, Layson is chair of the Agriculture Sub-committee of the Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resources Committee. He also serves on the Health Committee, the Legislative Forestry Study Committee, the Oil and Gas Interim Committee, and the Energy and Environment Committee.

Through his experience and knowledge as a forester, Representative Layson has been able to help the Alabama Forestry Commission and fire departments, as well as forestry and natural resources across the state over the years, not only in the House of Representatives, but also by his involvement in many private organizations. He sponsored the legislation which created the Alabama Prescribed Burning Act. Passed in 1995, this legislation declared that prescribed burning is a landowner property right that benefits the environment and the public. The Act limited the liability of landowners for prescribed burns which are conducted in compliance with the law. Additionally, he has sponsored numerous pieces of legislation which benefitted volunteer fire departments. Prior to his election to the Legislature, he served on the committee which drafted Alabama's Best Management Practices (BMPs) for forestry.

Layson served from 1979 to 1983 as a Commissioner of the Alabama Forestry Commission. He is one of the first life members of the Alabama Wildlife Federation and has served two terms as president of that organization. He is a past member of the Board of Directors of the Alabama Forestry Association and is past chairman of the Alabama Division for the Society of American Foresters. Currently, he is serving on the Advisory Council of Auburn University's School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences.

He also serves on many national committees including the American Legislative Exchange Council, the

Council of State Governments, and has been an Alabama delegate to the National Wildlife Federation for five years.

Representative Layson has been honored as a recipient of the Governor's Conservationist of the Year Award in Forestry, the Kelly Mosley Environmental Award, and the American Pulpwood Association's Southwestern U.S. Technical Writing Award.

At home in Pickens County he is equally involved in his community. He is a Lay Leader and Lay Speaker of the United Methodist Church, a founder of the Reform Area Public Library, a past President of the Reform Rotary Club, a member of the Pickens County Mental Health Association, a Master Mason, a member of the American Legion, Sierra Club, Alabama Cattlemen's Association, Boy Scout Troup Committee, and is a proud member of 16 fire departments.

According to Wayne Strawbridge, Alabama Forestry Commission Northwest Regional Forester, “Allen has an excellent knowledge of how we operate and as a registered forester he understands the job that we do.” Strawbridge, who has known Representative Layson since he (Layson) first came to Alabama “34-35 years ago,” says, “Allen has always been willing to help with forestry and volunteer fire department matters in any way he could. He is more than willing to help us in the legislature and he will listen to us and our concerns.” ☛

*Editor's Note: **Legislative Profile** is a new segment of the **Legislation and Policy** department. Its purpose is to spotlight state legislators who have been a friend of the Alabama Forestry Commission, forest industry, and Rural Community Fire Protection (RCFP) over the years. We extend a special thanks to Representative Layson for agreeing to be the first “profile.”*

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